COPING with GRIEF & LOSS

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
University of Pennsylvania

Grief can disrupt your daily life, causing problems with sleep, appetite, motivation or concentration. You may be despondent and have no interest in work or socializing.

Counseling can help you make sense of thoughts and reactions to grief and develop a coping strategy. Some worry that sharing these thoughts may be a burden on friends and family. If so, it may be easier to share feelings of anger, guilt, and sadness with a professional. Grief is difficult to process, but it can be overcome.

People experiencing loss can sometimes feel such despair that they contemplate suicide. If you have any such thoughts, please contact a mental health professional, such as CAPS (215-898-7021).
A sudden, unexpected death of someone you know can be an intense experience. You may feel puzzled, shocked, angry, sad. You might want to retreat, and/or avoid class, friends, family, and social activities. Some students sleep or eat when distressed, others can’t rest and have no appetite.

Grief can result in a wave of overwhelming emotions and coping can be slow and painful. People process grief in different ways. Some cry and talk, others hold it in. Grief must be worked through to get to a place of healthy acceptance, remembrance, and progressing with your life.

**DENIAL AND SHOCK**

Death can be difficult to accept. You may refuse to believe it and won’t want to discuss with anyone.

**ANGER**

Sometimes grief is mixed with rage. You may feel angry at the unfairness of life or even at the person who died.

**BARGAINING**

Some people may bargain spiritually, offering to trade a possession or part of their life to bring back a loved one.

**GUILT**

Sometimes people feel guilty for surviving, for moving on, or for making new connections and memories after a loss.

**DEPRESSION**

Loss can lead to mood fluctuations, sadness, despair, and difficulty functioning as usual.

**LONELINESS**

The death of someone close can leave you feeling lonely going through the routine of your daily life.

**ACCEPTANCE**

Eventually, the reality of loss leads to acceptance. Slowly renewing connections, creating new goals and resuming your routine will help you come to terms with the loss.

**HOPE**

With time, support, and resilience, most people reach a stage where they can balance painful memories of their loss with hope and anticipation for the future.

All people experience grief differently, but some of the typical feelings include:

**HELPING YOURSELF**

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**GET THROUGH**

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**THE GRIEF PROCESS**

**PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL/CULTURAL RITUALS**

Prayer, memorial services, family traditions, speaking with respected community leaders and other cultural rituals can help you acknowledge, express, and cope with grief and loss. You may find comfort in sharing your sorrow and feel less alone while receiving others’ comfort and support. Participating in these rituals can help you find meaning in life and death and accept your loss.

**UTILIZING SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Sharing your loss with family and friends may bring a new sense of connection and gradual diminishing of the pain. Talking, sharing, crying, and remembering are all important ways of recovering from grief.

**STICKING TO A ROUTINE**

Maintaining a schedule even when you do not feel like it can provide necessary structure and normalcy as you process your grief.

**EXpressing your feelings**

Talking about your feelings can be extremely powerful. Writing, music, and art may also help you express yourself and heal.

**Remembering and Honoring Your Loved One**

Commemorating birthdays or anniversaries are an important way to honor and remain connected with those you loved and lost. Rituals can create togetherness in a group with shared pain and memories.